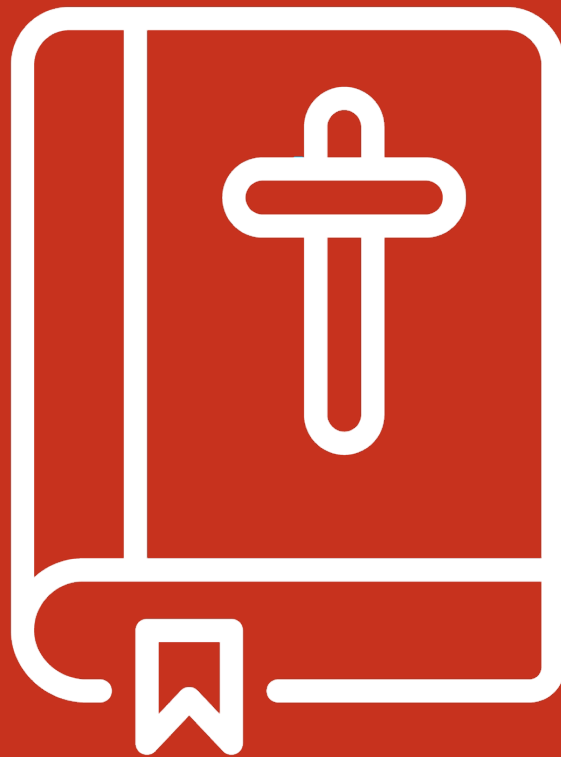


A Series of Short Messages with Big Truths

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES

Issue Two



RELYING AND RESTING

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STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #2: Relying And Resting

[The following transcript is from a ten-minute message shared with an audience at a local gathering.]

When our son, Jacob, was born back in November 2000, I was beyond excited. I had a son! Visions of father-son bonding danced in my head — we'd hit tennis balls, go running, play video games.

It was going to be awesome!

Then reality hit me. He was two days old. Two. Days. Old. The kid had no skills. He couldn't hit a tennis ball, couldn't run, and had no idea how to hold a controller. His entire skill set boiled down to eating, sleeping, and pooping — sometimes all at once.

I'd look at Paula and say, *"You play with him. He can't do anything."*

But babies grow. Fast forward through the years, and one day, he wasn't just playing tennis — he was destroying me on the court. We'd play video games, and I couldn't even figure out what was happening before I lost. Running together? Forget it. I felt like a bicycle chasing a Ferrari.

The day came when he went to Paula and said, *"Mom, you play with dad – he can't do anything!"*

At some point, we realized that when one of us felt we couldn't win, it didn't make us want to try harder, it made us want to give up. So, we started spotting points. I might say, *"Want to play basketball? First to ten wins, and I'll spot you eight."*

But that's still too hard when you're 2 foot 10, and your dad's 5 foot 10 and can block your every shot, right? But what if I said, *"First to ten wins, and I'll spot you all ten"*? Now, the outcome is certain – he can't lose. The pressure disappears, and he's free to give it everything he's got, no longer afraid to fail.

That is how God relates to us when we put our faith in Jesus.

Because of what Jesus has done for us, we already have all the points we need for eternal life. The final score has been tallied. When it comes to our salvation, there is nothing we can do to gain points and nothing we can do to lose points. The threat of failure and the pressure to perform has been removed.

Now we are free to give it everything we've got to live for Jesus because there is no way we can lose in the end. Grace wins. Game over.

So, here's the main point that I want to make, the one thing that I hope we all leave here with today...

We are to rest in grace and rely on grace as we follow Jesus.

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #2: Relying And Resting

Listen to what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (ESV)

What many Christians are taught is some version of this endless cycle of events...

- You are supposed to do this.
- You fail when you do this.
- You need to try harder to do this.

And grace is missing from this. The power and desire and wisdom and help and security that God graciously supplies to us isn't the focus in this kind of teaching. Your self-effort is the focus, and that sets you up to fail. It's too hard, and you're going to lose if it's all up to you. And it will become a joyless, hopeless burden on you.

But that's not how the Apostle Paul thinks or speaks here. What we find in 1 Corinthians 15:10 is a beautiful snapshot of how grace operates in our lives.

1. First, it changes our identity ("*by the grace of God I am what I am*").
2. Second, it enables us to live out that identity ("*I worked harder ... though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.*").

Both who we are as Christians and what we do as Christians is because of grace.

Now, you don't earn grace; it's a gift from God, paid for in full by Jesus, activated in our lives by the Holy Spirit. And it's never in vain, but always has a powerful, transforming effect upon our lives. That's what the Bible is saying here.

Beware any religion, philosophy or belief system that places more emphasis on what we are to do than on what Jesus does in us, for us and through us.

The Christian faith is not built on good behavior, good morals, good works or good advice about what we must do; it is built on the good news of all that Jesus does.

Are you tracking with that?

We are to rest in grace and rely on grace as we follow Jesus.

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #2: Relying And Resting

Now, listen, with that said...

Grace isn't opposed to effort: it's opposed to us trying to earn what we've been freely given.

Grace isn't opposed to effort; it actually produces effort. How did Paul work hard? By grace!

Grace will have an effect upon our lives, namely changing who we are and what we do. How are we to respond to grace? We work hard.

- We work hard to serve, obey and treasure God.
- We work hard to protect our marriages and families.
- We work hard to love, forgive and help other people.
- We work hard to be the best co-worker, neighbor, and teammate we can be.
- We work hard to resist temptation and endure trials.
- We work hard to make the most of our time.
- We work hard to share the gospel.
- We work hard to enjoy life to the glory of God.
- We work hard to take a break, get some rest and be refreshed in Jesus.
- We work hard to be who we were made to be and do what we were made to do.

But we work hard in reliance on grace and secure in grace. God is the enabler in all of this, and God is the guarantee in all of this.

We do what we do because He does what He does.

His work saves us before we do our work.

His work guides us to do our work.

His work gives us power to do our work.

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #2: Relying And Resting

His work makes us happy to do our work.

That's what it means to RELY ON GRACE ... to ask Him to guide us, motivate us and help us to work hard. And then do it.

And listen to what the Bible says in Philippians 1:6 about God's work that is so encouraging – and just takes all the pressure off as we work hard ourselves by His grace. It says this...

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. – Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

This work that Paul says God is doing in us as we work hard by grace is a work that God will complete. We can be sure of this.

That's what it means to REST IN GRACE. To be sure God isn't going to give up on us no matter how many times we stumble and fall.

That's why we can give it everything we've got in following Jesus, empowered and encouraged by the grace of God, knowing that the outcome is certain for us.

He started this work.

He is continuing this work.

He will finish this work.

Because of this truth, we don't have to give in to despair when we stumble in our faith or give up in trying to live out our faith. There is grace to forgive us when we get this wrong and grace to help us get it right. Grace is never in vain. God is at work in our lives, and He will finish what He started.

We are to rest in grace and rely on grace as we follow Jesus.

So, let me ask you this before we close: Has God started His good work in you?

Listen, you'll never score enough points to get to heaven on your own. In fact, the Bible says we've all fallen short of His standard. That's what sin is... it's "*missing the mark.*" God's going to have to spot you everything for you to make it. And that's just what He's done.

God sent Jesus to live the perfect life you didn't live, die the death you deserve to forgive your sin, and rise victoriously so you can be restored to God and know the fullness of His grace. He has measured up in

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #2: Relying And Resting

every way that you and I cannot, and when we ask Him to forgive us and change us, He does.

So, if you haven't done that yet, do it this morning. Ask Jesus to save you. And if you mean it, He will do it. If you have questions, come see me today when we are done.

For all of us who know Jesus, let's leave here resolved to give everything we've got to following Him with our lives. Let's work hard by grace to know Jesus and make Him known so that God is honored in us and we are happy in Him.

And let's do so assured of three things that are true because of what Jesus has done for us with His life...

God has accepted us. God is for us. God will help us.

Stop putting pressure on yourself and be free to take shot after shot by faith!

Jesus has already earned the game-winning points and has credited them to our stat line.

The final score has been tallied, and He has guaranteed the outcome.

We can work hard by grace because God is working in us. And He will finish what He started.

Let's pray...

"Heavenly Father, we want to pause to give you thanks for the work You did through the life of Jesus so we can be forgiven and freed from sin, and for the work you have started in us because of grace. Help us to leave this place today assured that we belong to You and empowered to work hard to be who You made us to be and do what You made us to do. In whatever specific area our lives need our immediate attention, would you put that into our minds and upon our hearts today and help us get busy this week with no pressure to win your approval because Jesus has already done so on our behalf. Be glorified in our lives, be the treasure of our lives and build Your kingdom through our lives. We ask this in the Name of Jesus, amen."

Reflection Questions

1. What stood out to you from this message as most meaningful? Why?
2. What was the central idea or theme from this message?
3. What Bible verses or passages were used, and how do they support the message?
4. How does this message relate to your life right now?
5. In what ways did this message convict, encourage or inspire you?
6. What good news did you receive in this message?
7. What did you learn about God that is praiseworthy in this message?
8. How was grace and the gospel presented in this message?
9. What do you think God wants you to do as a response to this message?
10. With whom do you need to share or discuss this message?

PRAY IT

- *God, I praise you because...*
- *I confess that I struggle with...*
- *I thank you for...*
- *Please help me...*

How has God spoken to you through this message?

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Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

NOTE: There are a number of free resources available at JimmyBrown.com, and I regularly add more to the site. Check back often for additional materials to access at no cost.

Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/
- Daily devotions: www.FinishLineFaith.com or www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): www.TheMissionAmerica.com

*If this resource has been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*